


MEMORANDUM TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: David B. Humpton, City Manager 

DATE: October 12, 2006

SUBJECT: November 6, 2007 City Election

The next City of Gaithersburg election will be held on Tuesday, November 6, 2007. In preparation for the election, I held an initial meeting with the staff team that will coordinate with the Board of Supervisors of Elections to conduct the election.

As you are aware, a number of key elected officials across the State have addressed concerns about the current Diebold electronic voting equipment. In fact, it has been suggested that voters use the absentee process rather than voting electronically. Given statewide problems in the September primaries, it is very likely that the General Assembly will pass legislation during the 2007 Legislative Session that would result in modifications to the existing system or the outright replacement of the Diebold equipment; however, because there will not be a statewide election until September of 2008, it is very possible that new voting equipment that may be mandated by the legislature would not be available for the City's November, 2007 election.

If this is the case, one of the key issues that needs to be addressed is what voting equipment the City will use. While we have successfully used the State of Maryland's Diebold electronic voting equipment in our last two elections, there is some concern that the voting units themselves can be manipulated either physically through tampering or through the use of other electronic devices to intercept or modify election results. Additionally, there were serious problems with the September 2006 primary election because Montgomery County Board of Elections staff failed to have the necessary voter access cards to enable the Diebold equipment at the polls.

Another common concern about the Diebold equipment is that voters do not get a paper record of their ballot choices. During the 2006 Legislative Session, the House of Delegates unanimously passed a bill requiring that the Diebold equipment be modified to produce a paper record. The Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee reported favorably on a similar bill, but the full Senate never acted on either bill.

Staff will work with the Board of Supervisors of Elections to be prepared to implement an alternative voting process in the event it is determined that it is not desirable to use the existing Diebold equipment. It is my understanding that City of Rockville officials are also very concerned about this issue, and are considering alternative voting systems. Our staff will coordinate with the City of Rockville and share ideas.

Staff will briefly mention this item during the October 16, 2006 Mayor and City Council meeting. I believe it is important to inform the public that the Board of Supervisors of Elections will be dealing with this issue in the very near future so as to be well prepared for the City's November 2007 election.

cc: Board of Supervisors of Elections
Fred Felton
Sarah Paxton